

Callington Jan 20th 1908

Mr Chairman & Gentlemen

I have the honour to present my annual report on the health & sanitary condition of your district for the year ending Dec 31/07. Enclosed tables of mortality & cases of infectious disease.

CALLINGTON IN 1907.

SANITARY CONDITION.—THE HOUSING QUESTION.

THE TRAMP NUISANCE.

To Callington Urban Council, on Monday, the Medical Officer of Health (Dr. H. Davis, jun.) presented his annual report as follows:—

VITAL STATISTICS.

The number of births registered in the district was 37, 17 males and 20 females; the number of deaths, 29, 15 males and 14 females; natural increase, 8. This would give a birth-rate of 21.5, and a death-rate of 16.9 per 1,000 per annum on a population of 1,714 as at the last census. In the previous year there were 35 births and 28 deaths. Both the birth-rate and the death-rate compare favourably with the corresponding rates of the county, the former showing a slight improvement on the previous year. But the general decline during the last six years is not peculiar to this district: it is noticeable throughout the county.

Three deaths occurred under 1 year, 6 deaths between 1 and 5 years, and 11 deaths over 70. Of these, 6 were over 80, the oldest being 90. Six deaths were recorded as being due to diseases of the respiratory system, viz.: 2 phthisis, 2 bronchitis, 1 whooping-cough, and 1 laryngitis. There were 4 deaths from heart disease, 3 from cancer, 4 from diphtheria, and 12 from various causes.

THE BABY FARMING CASE.

The infantile death-rate is not high, but the circumstances attending the deaths of two children, necessitating a coroner's inquest, makes it deserving careful consideration. It is by no means limited to this year that we have abundant evidence of the widespread errors concerning the feeding of infants on unsuitable farinaceous foods and the want of ventilation of houses, which must tell upon infants who spend far too great a proportion of their time in a vitiated atmosphere. Some supervision appears essential to the better health of infants, and I intend as soon as possible to present a scheme for this purpose, which I believe is practicable and will at least prevent a recurrence of what we have experienced during the past year.

EPIDEMICS.

One case of scarlatina was notified in March and another in August; both cases were isolated at their respective homes, and the greatest care exercised to prevent a spread of the disease. Considering the prevalence of this disease in the previous year, I think it a gratifying result that no other cases occurred. Diphtheria appeared in April and again in July and August; nine cases were notified, four ending fatally. This disease is usually regarded as a test of sanitary deficiencies, but as it first appeared on premises where the sanitary conditions are exceptionally good, its occurrence can only be regarded as an exception to the rule. Possibly two or even three of the cases were communicated, although every precaution was taken to prevent this. This outbreak was certainly serious, and added considerably to the zymotic and general death-rate. On the other hand, we have the continued absence of the equally significant disease, typhoid fever, and as the general death-rate falls below 17 per 1,000, the district justly claims the distinction of being classed a "healthy district."

Vaccination is less satisfactory; five certificates for exemption have been granted, against two last year; there have been no prosecutions.

SEWERAGE.

A new sewer has been constructed in Saltash-road, from the house recently known as Church-cottage to Chubb's Temperance Hotel. It is a 9in. sewer of glazed earthenware pipes, cement jointed, provided with two manholes, a 6in. ventilation shaft, and four large iron street gullies. The purpose of this sewer is principally to provide a means of drainage for the new County School, now nearing completion; also to drain Chubb's Temperance Hotel premises, most difficult to drain by any other means. Connections have been put in at New-road and the Market entrance to provide for the drains from the cattle market not yet constructed; it being, I think, rightly presumed that the discharge must take place at these points. The storm water on the east side of the road required consideration, it being far too great at times for the gully at the National School; therefore, a drain was made across the road to intercept the flow, and we can say it is answering the purpose thoroughly. The sewer has not numerous connections, but their importance is undoubtedly sufficient to justify its construction. Every detail of the work was under the constant personal supervision and instruction of Mr. Richards, the sanitary inspector, who merits the gratitude of the Council for thoroughness of workmanship. Some ventilation-shafts have been erected in Fore-street and Chapel-street to relieve the sewers where trapping has been carried out in these streets, and the result is quite satisfactory. The total cost of these undertakings is about £60.

DRAINAGE.

Five houses have had their drains relaid and smoke-tested, and four new w.c.'s have been built during the year. With regard to the latter, I have to report fewer each year, the district having been steadily better provided.

WATER SUPPLY.

An exceptionally wet summer has afforded a good water supply, and there has been little or no reason for complaint. The public stream at Pipe Well and numerous pumps have had ample supply; and the supply from the reservoirs of the Waterworks Company has been carefully regulated, a good pressure in the services at the highest levels being thereby well maintained. What our position is in times of drought we know too well, and it is to be hoped that the Waterworks Company will fulfil their promise in constructing the reservoir of 300,000 gallons storage, now that they have completed the reservoir to supply Kelly Bray, which is outside our district. Until this, the adoption of automatic flushing cisterns for our sewers cannot be entertained.

TRADE PREMISES.

The bakehouses have been inspected; they maintain a very satisfactory degree of cleanliness and good management. Slaughter-houses and dairies and cowsheds, although improved in many respects, leave much to be desired. Up to the present we have worked at a considerable disadvantage, having no regulations nor bye-laws respecting them of our own. This matter has been thoroughly discussed by your Council, and I am glad to say you have adopted both regulations and bye-laws, the application

of which and the registration will entail a large amount of work during the coming year, and must result in considerable reforms. The requirements of the Factory and Workshops Act have been observed, as far as the cases in the district permit.

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

Launceston-terrace has been extended by two houses, having excellent sanitary arrangements and good water supply. These are the only new houses completed during the year. They indirectly benefit the working classes, as there is a tendency for people to move into better houses, thus leaving cottages available. There are now about six good cottages unoccupied, but this is quite exceptional, the demand usually being in excess of the supply, and it is on account of the latter condition that habitation of the back-to-back houses is tolerated to the present extent. On the whole, houses are kept in very fair state of repair, and cases of defective sanitary condition are below the average, and there has been no overcrowding in these houses.

For some years two houses in Lower-street have remained unoccupied and barricaded; they are an eyesore and detract from the respectable appearance of the town. It is understood and hoped that this will be remedied soon. A cottage in Moonsfield, the property of the same landlord, is in a similar condition, and locally quite as objectionable. Tilley-street, as a residential area, dies hard. Amid a mass of ruins, a cottage has struggled into a new lease of existence. Opposite this are cottages that have been emphatically condemned as unfit for human habitation. Although undergoing some repairs of insignificance, it is extremely unlikely the Council will alter its decision.

Although not a residence, undoubtedly the most important addition to the district is the new County School; the sanitation is perfect, has been examined, and the drains smoke-tested, and the water supply is good. Two new houses are in course of building in Liskeard-road.

TRAMPS AND THE OLD LODGING-HOUSE.

The common lodging-house no longer exists as such, but has been converted into three good cottages, a change we cannot fail to appreciate. Until the ill-health of the late proprietor, serious troubles rarely occurred, but since then it became filthy and ill-kept, and overcrowding was of frequent occurrence. To appreciate the difficulties in dealing with the overcrowding in a house accommodating about twelve persons, I may explain that when a tramp arrived in the town apparently without means, he could, on application to the police, obtain a ticket which entitled him to one night's lodgings, the proprietor ultimately receiving from the rates, through the Relieving Officer, 4d. for each ticket presented. In this way, six years ago, tickets were usually distributed at the rate of 7 to 12 per quarter; but they were seriously increasing, until last year their distribution reached from 70 to 100 per quarter, and this does not include tramps who paid for their own lodgings, or regular lodgers. This easy way of obtaining lodgings was a great inducement to tramps, and the lodging-house accommodation would have necessitated considerable extension, with a corresponding increase in the risk of importing disease, and a nuisance and annoyance to the public, had things gone on the way they were going.

SCAVENGING AND HOUSE REFUSE.

The Authority is responsible for the removal of house refuse, and the work is carried out by contract in a satisfactory manner. The ashbins, which are emptied weekly, are in many instances of metal, but far too many are rickety wooden boxes without covers. The contents, which should be kept dry, become wet and adhere to the sides and bottom, and the wood becomes saturated with offensive matter, and their cleansing is an impossibility. We are constantly advising their being substituted by galvanized iron bins with covers, which can be obtained for 6s. and last many years, but the owners of backyards are slow to appreciate the advantage. Broken glass, earthenware, etc., are collected separately or removed once a month; the amount is surprisingly great, and the system, originated a year ago, works well.

Deposits of dung and filth are the cause of many actions, and I must again remark they recur too frequently on the same premises. It is unpleasant to take formal proceedings, but such may become necessary. There still seems a firm belief with many that pigs cannot be kept and thrive except under most filthy conditions. Such cases, and where there is infringement of the bye-laws respecting proximity of pigs to dwellings, are dealt with as discovered.

THE DUST NUISANCE.

The intolerable annoyance and nuisance caused by dust raised by motor and other traffic in the streets should excite your attention, and definite action is called for in obtaining a water-cart before a dry summer is on us. The importance of this matter is sufficiently understood by you to need no further comment. The question of building a public urinal is receiving your attention, and I have no doubt will ultimately be productive of good result.

The Infectious Disease (Notification) Act, 1889, and Part III. Public Health (Amendment) Act, 1890, have been adopted. Bye-laws in existence are in relation to nuisances, common lodging-houses, and new buildings. Bye-laws and regulations respecting slaughter-houses and dairies and cowsheds are in the course of preparation.

Mr. J. Pearce proposed, and Mr. J. Huggins seconded, a hearty vote of thanks to the Medical Officer of Health for his report, which, they said, was singularly clear, emphatic, and lucid.—The vote was carried unanimously, and Dr. Davis thanked the members.

of Health

